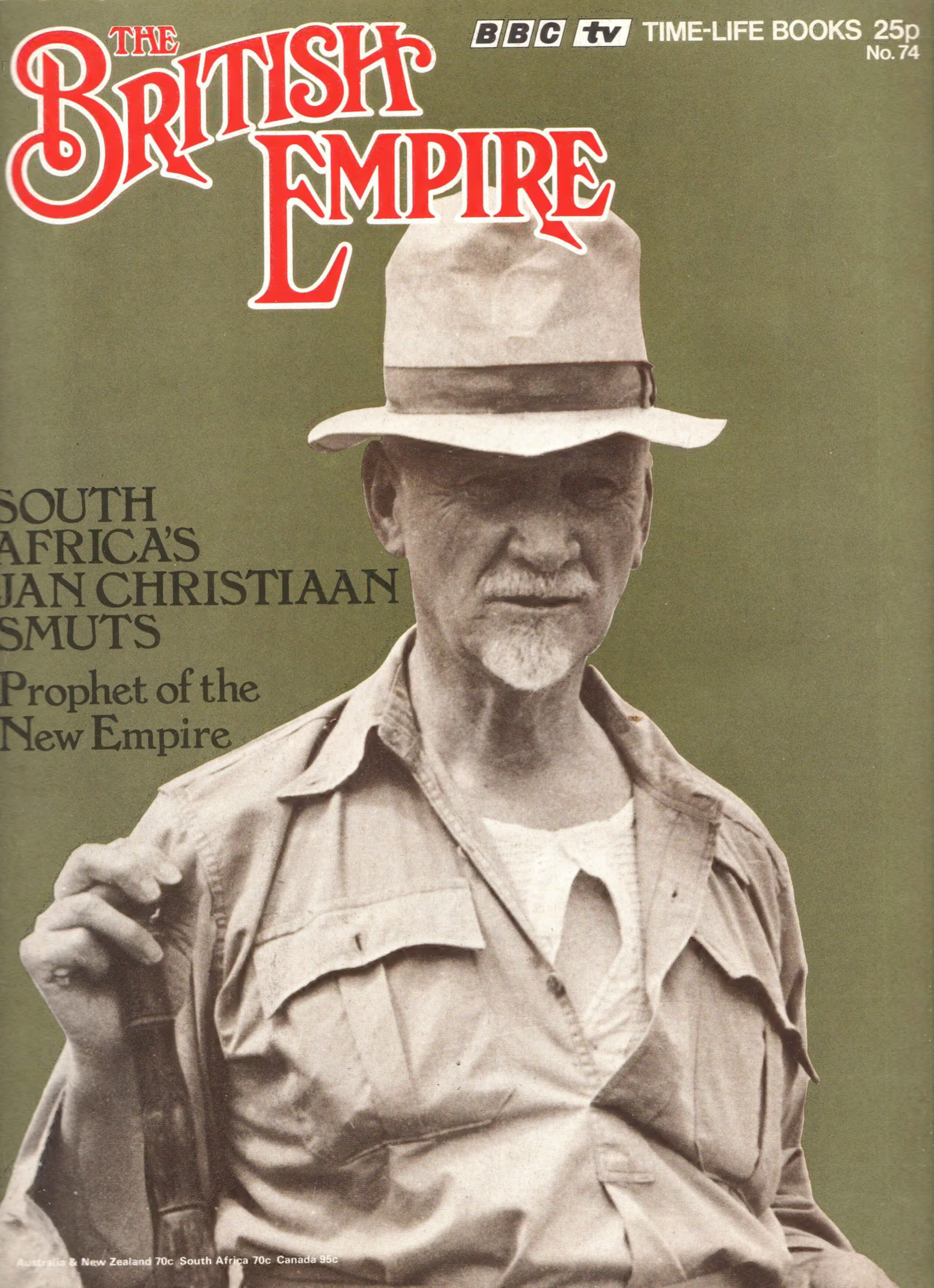
BBC tv TIME-LIFE BOOKS 25p
No. 74

THE BRITISH EMPIRE



SOUTH AFRICA'S JAN CHRISTIAAN SMUTS

Prophet of the New Empire

Australia & New Zealand 70c South Africa 70c Canada 95c

THE BRITISH EMPIRE

BBC tv TIME-LIFE BOOKS 25p
No. 74

Editor John Man
Deputy Editor Christopher Farman
Picture Editor Pamela Marke
Design Consultant Louis Klein
Staff Writer Susan Hillaby
Picture Researchers Kerry Arnold, Susan Stratton
Art Director Graham Davis
Art Assistant Vivienne Field
Editorial Assistant Vanessa Kramer
Staff Photographer Eileen Tweedy
Partwork Director Kurt Medina
Sales Director George Gillespie
Consultants D. K. Fieldhouse, Lecturer in Commonwealth History and Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford
A. F. Madden, Reader in Commonwealth Government and Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford

NEIL HEPBURN, who wrote the main text of this issue, was born in South Africa. After graduating at the University of Natal he went into broadcasting. Since 1960 he has lived in Britain and has worked for *The Economist* and the B.B.C. For the past three years he has been a freelance writer, specializing in the history and politics of his native country.

Subscriptions – These are available at £6·50 for six months, inclusive of postage and packing. For addresses outside of the United Kingdom, the rate is £8·75, inclusive of surface postage and packing.
Back Numbers – These are available at your local newsagent or may be secured by post for the inclusive price of 25p per issue. Be sure and specify which issue(s) you desire.
Orders for both subscriptions and back numbers should be sent, with remittance, to *The British Empire*, BBC Publications, 35 Marylebone High St., London W1M 4AA.
Binders – These may be ordered at £1·15 including V.A.T. for the Standard edition and £1·92 including V.A.T. for the Deluxe edition, either individually or on subscription. Orders, with remittance, should be sent to *British Empire Binders*, BBC Publications, P.O. Box No. 126, London SE1 5JZ.
NOTE: All above payments should be crossed cheque/P.O.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: (*t*=top; *b*=bottom; *l*=left; *r*=right; *c*=centre). Cover: Fox Photos Ltd. Inside back cover: by courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Associated Press Ltd. 2064; Camera Press Ltd. 2068/9*b*; J. Allan Cash 2068*t*, 2069*t*, *br*; Imperial War Museum 2053–9 (except map 2054); Keystone Press Agency Ltd. 2070–2; Paul Popper Ltd. 2048/9, 2067; Private Collection 2063*t*, *br*; Radio Times Hulton Picture Library 2045–6, 2052, 2062, 2062/3*b*, 2065. PHOTOGRAPHERS: Andrew Bailey 2068/9*b*; Eileen Tweedy inside back cover. MAP: Roger Pring 2054.

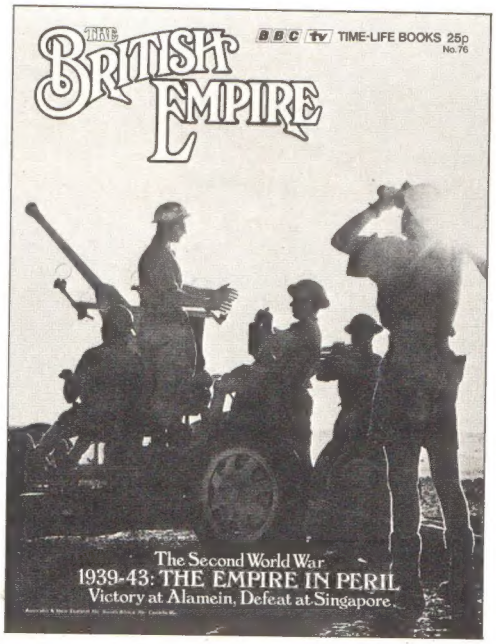
© 1972. Time-Life International (Nederland) B.V.

Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

Published by Time-Life International (Nederland) B.V. in co-operation with the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Distributed in the U.K. by Time-Life International Ltd. and BBC Publications.

Printed in England by Jarrold and Sons Ltd. Norwich.



CONTENTS

2045. Smuts: Prophet of the New Empire
Jan Christiaan Smuts, a young Boer lawyer, takes up arms to resist the might of the British Empire and proclaims a new ideal: the British Commonwealth

2054. Picture Essay: Into the Awful Desert
Troops from the fledgling Union of South Africa fight Britain's cause in the First World War.

2060. Years of Trial and Victory
Praised for his wise international diplomacy, Smuts becomes the focus of controversy and conflict in his own country.

2067. Picture Essay: The Coming of Apartheid
New men with a new and ruthless concept of race relations assume power in South Africa.

2072. The Final Trek
With his policies rejected by the electorate and his health failing, Smuts in his last years seeks consolation outside politics.

Cover: Smuts's lean, sun-tanned body, casual hat and open-necked bush shirt provide a typical portrait of the rural Afrikaner – and give no hint of the pro-Empire side of his character.

SMUTS: PROPHET OF THE NEW EMPIRE

By Neil Hepburn

Jan Christiaan Smuts was complex, controversial and filled with contradictions. He fought the British, but never ceased to love them. He spoke Afrikaans at home, but politically he thought in English. He was in many ways the very embodiment of Empire; yet it was he who broke the Empire pattern and gave the lead in transforming the imperial family of nations into what he insisted it really was, a Commonwealth.

A veld-born Afrikaner, staunchly nationalistic, he had a breadth of vision that carried him far beyond "the hills of my beginnings" into the councils of the world. He helped, after the First World War, to create the League of Nations, and after the Second World War, when he was 74, to secure the United Nations' future by urging compromises amongst the bickering Allies.

His statue stands in Parliament Square, the only Commonwealth leader there. And his sculptured figure is as different from the others that dot the grass – traditional statesmen in traditional poses – as was the man himself.

He is poised on tiptoe, animated, looking forward, the eyes on some distant goal, a slim, lightly-bearded boy-scout figure. One can almost see that the eyes are blue and penetrating, almost hear the rapid, machine-gun, high-pitched speech.

Slim in body, and, for the Afrikaners, "slim" in character too: "Slim Jannie," they called him for in Afrikaans "slim" is a quality of mind rather than body. It comes close to crafty, wily, canny. Smuts was all these things.

When he was a Boer enemy, British Intelligence described him as "pleasant, plausible and cunning." Yet as a loyal son of Empire, he was all the mother-country expected of her greatest imperial sons. He was first the favoured child, eagerly absorbing ideas, ideals and poetry from the maternal store of culture; then the rebellious young man, revolted by certain aspects of matriarchal dominance; then, once again, the honoured member of the family, having gained respect by his conduct in the fight and in the peace that followed; and, at last, the family's conscience and its wisest member.

Epstein's wiry, purposeful statue of Smuts in Parliament Square is a tribute to the South African's pre-eminence as an imperial leader.

Born in the Cape Colony in 1870, he had always lived under British rule and had envisaged a career within the British context. Union Jacks waved on May 24, the day of his birth, not for him but because it was Queen Victoria's birthday.

Though his family were loyally British, they were hereditarily and spiritually completely Boer. *Boer* means farmer, and his ancestors – stern Calvinists – had come from Holland in the 17th Century to till the rich soil and raise cattle on the fertile Cape hillsides. Duty, religion, a stern respect for property; these were their watchwords.

The boy did not go to school until he was 12, for he had an older brother and it was the custom that only the eldest should have an education. Instead, he herded *beeste* for his father, and in his lonely rambles with them he learned to know and to revere the fields and the hills and the rocks. His adoration for nature, almost a second religion, remained throughout his life. When his brother died, it was his turn, at last, to learn to read. From now on life was to be a non-stop upward spiral.

He went to Victoria College, Stellenbosch, where he fell in love with philosophy and botany, with Shelley, Shakespeare, Goethe, Walt Whitman – and, at 17, with a pretty and intelligent local girl, Sybella Margaretha Krige, the adored "Isie" whom he married ten years later.

Soon after they met he sailed for England to take up a scholarship at Cambridge. He was academically brilliant, but as a poor farm boy who spoke with a

guttural accent, he was a million miles removed from the university's brilliant social life. Again on a scholarship, he read law at London's Middle Temple.

He returned to the Cape to find two violently opposed schools of political thought. To many Boers, South Africa's future lay in the leadership of Cecil Rhodes, Premier of the Cape Colony, who was determined to weld Dutch and English into a unified community. The name of Rhodes's party expressed his goal: the *Afrikaner Bond*.

Opposing him was Paul Kruger, President of the Transvaal (known also as the South African Republic) a sturdy rock-like patriarch who was dedicated to "*Afrika voor Afrikanders*."

From his boyhood, Smuts had felt that strength lay in association, in the unity of the whole, a philosophy he was later to rationalize under the name of "holism" – from the Greek *Holos*, meaning "whole." At 20, he wrote that "the cornerstone of South African politics [is] the fact that South Africa is one, that consisting as it does of separate parts, it yet forms one commercial and moral unity." Clearly, Rhodes was his man.

The young lawyer was making only a scratch living in his profession and he eked it out by writing newspaper articles. As yet, he had neither the stature nor the financial stability to enter politics. It never occurred to him that when he did, it would be in support of the Afrikaner nationalism which was welling up so angrily in the Transvaal.

This hostility amounted almost to hatred, and was directed against the *Uitlanders* – the foreigners, most of them British – who had come in great numbers to mine the newly discovered gold of the Witwatersrand and who were disturbing the Afrikaners' pastoral lethargy by demanding political representation.

But events forced Smuts to turn his back on the Cape and to become Kruger's ally in the Transvaal, as ardent an enemy of Rhodes, and of British policy, as was the stubborn old "Oom Paul," Uncle Paul Kruger himself.

Smuts had been shocked into his about-face by an act that has always been a blot on British history, the Jameson Raid. *Uitlanders*, denied the vote, decided to stage an armed uprising in Johannesburg. Rhodes deputed one of his closest colleagues, Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, to stand by on the Bechuanaland border with 500 armed British irregulars in case they needed help.

The time chosen for the revolt – around Christmas, 1895 – came and passed and nothing happened. So Jameson, with no orders, impetuously set out to force the revolt by marching on the Transvaal capital on December 29. The result was a fiasco. Jameson and his men were ignominiously taken prisoner and hatred blazed between Boer and Briton.

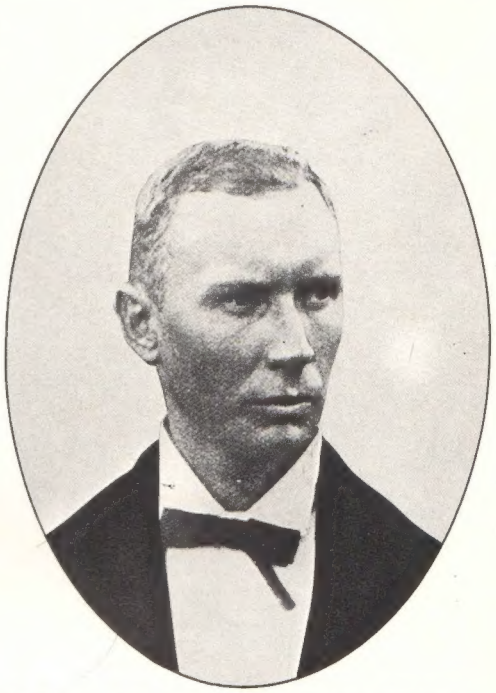
The raid drove Cecil Rhodes from office; and it drove Jan Smuts, disillusioned, into Kruger's camp. During the next year Smuts saw clearly that Britain was attempting to assert her paramountcy in all of southern Africa, including the independent Boer republics north of the Orange River – the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

Heartsick, Smuts wrote: "We are weary of the past; we are weary of our own errors and the errors of Downing Street, old, new and newer; and our prayer now is that we may be left alone to redeem ourselves." He married Isie, and left for Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal, where he set up in law.

It was the opening of his door to greatness: within 18 months he was State Attorney in Kruger's government; within two years the South African Republic's chief negotiator with Britain; within three years an audacious military commander in the Boer War, venerated by his men and ungrudgingly respected by his enemy, and within four – still only 31 – an undisputed leader, and his people's trusted legal adviser at the agonizing surrender of Vereeniging, which spelled the Boers' defeat in the conflict that had raged from 1899 to 1902.

Smuts had been courageous and resourceful in the field. As with most dedicated soldiers, his certainty of rightness had been little shaded by doubt or sentiment. Towards the end, he almost managed to swing the war in favour of the Boers: he invaded the Cape with a tiny force of 200 Transvaalers, and if he had been luckier in his timing he might have opened a second front, which was what Britain feared most. But in the midst of his campaign – three months of sharp engagements – he was summoned to help negotiate peace.

It had become clear to even the most ardent Afrikaners that to prolong the armed struggle could mean only utter ruin. Boer leaders began to seek ways to end the war with honour and independence intact. A forlorn hope. Both Lord Milner, the British High Commissioner in Cape Town and Lord Kitchener, the commander-in-chief, told the Boer representatives flatly that they would not even consider the Boers' continued independence after surrender. So the Boers summoned the leaders of their commandos from the field, Smuts among them, to ask if they were willing to pay so heavy a price for peace.



As State Attorney of the Transvaal Republic in 1899, Smuts, at only 28, was officially two years too young for a ministerial post.

It was now that Smuts exhibited a flexibility – some have called it lack of principle – that affected the course of South African politics well beyond his own life. There was deep division. A minority, the *bittereinders*, declared that they would fight to the "bitter end," that they would rather die than give up.

But the majority could see no point in wiping out their own people for the sake of an idea. Louis Botha, commander-in-

chief of the Boer army, a gruff, hearty man with great charm, took the majority stand. He was convinced that his compatriots could survive only by giving up their nationhood. Smuts, always a realist and a conciliator, was also convinced.

In carrying his conviction into the final debate at Vereeniging in May, 1902, he displayed the trait that motivated many of his most controversial acts in later years: when the end in any conflict seemed inevitable, he impetuously embraced it, even though it might mean

"Isie" Krige, who waited ten years for Smuts while he studied law in England and launched his career, married him in 1897.

defeat. Perhaps this was partly to get hardship and humiliation over with as quickly as possible. But it was undoubtedly, in part, because his extraordinary mind abhorred post mortems and always leapt forward to see what could be built from the disaster.

Others were prepared to advocate unconditional surrender, but with the mental reservation that they would renew the struggle when they had recovered their strength. Smuts argued for the terms offered: "Let us admit like men that the end has come for us. . . . We must sacrifice the Republics for the people." His advocacy clinched the decision.

Many Afrikaners were disillusioned. They felt that there was a point of adversity beyond which Smuts would no longer fight, that he would jettison a long-held principle to keep afloat his hope that "*alles sal regkom*" – everything will sort itself out in time. Most, however, recognized that he had not abandoned principle, but simply come to terms with facts.

He had, after all, been one of the chief negotiators and he knew past all doubt what many of the burghers were unwilling to admit – that what had been obtained was all that could be obtained. It was clear to him that the Boers' wellbeing lay not in rugged attempts at independence, but within the imperial framework. British power, instead of being fought, would have to be manipulated to ensure Boer survival and a Boer future.

In helping to draft the Treaty of Vereeniging, Smuts ran head-on, for the first time on an official level, into the question of black-white relationships. Years before he had said that the native question was *the* South African question, and that the white races must be "the trustees for the coloured races."

Trusteeship, however, meant to him protection and compassion, not equality. Democracy, he said, did not work even in "civilized Europe"; it was completely inapplicable to "barbarous Africa."

A Boer himself, he understood Boer attitudes. More important, he understood the history that had created them. When he sat down at the peace table he knew what his compatriots would accept and what they would reject. They had undertaken the Great Trek at least in part to escape from the effects of British emancipation in 1833, which had freed 39,000 Boer-owned slaves. Boers had engaged in bloody battles with the Matabele and the Zulu. They could look on the African as an enemy, as a servant or as a member of a "child race." But they certainly could not regard him as a potential equal.

The English, on the other hand, had been committed since Abolition to a Negro policy that moved towards full and equal rights. In the Cape Colony the franchise had already been granted to everyone, black or white, who could at least write his name and fulfil minimal property qualifications; about 15 per cent of the electorate were non-white.

During the treaty negotiations, when the question of native franchise in the defeated republics came up, Milner suggested that the franchise should "not be given to natives until after the introduction of self-government."

Smuts knew a danger-flag when he saw one. If this meant the automatic guarantee of a black vote immediately upon the restoration of independence, the Boers simply would not stand for it. He offered an alternative: "The question of granting the franchise to natives will not be decided until after the introduction of self-government." Thus the Boers would cope with the "native problem" in their own good time. The clause was accepted.

Not long after the war, Smuts conducted a revealing correspondence with John X. Merriman, later Premier of the Cape, on this touchy question. Merriman wrote: "I do not like the natives at all, and I wish that we had no black man in South Africa." But he believed in justice and fair play. In attacking Smuts's failure to mention the future of non-whites in a memorandum to the British Prime Minister, Henry Campbell-Bannerman, on the strength of which the Boers eventually gained self-government, Merriman went on: "What promise of permanence does *this* plan give? Is it not . . . building on a volcano, the suppressed force of which must some day burst forth in a destroying flood?"

He urged Smuts to adopt a qualified franchise with a high educational test and damn the consequences, which would be the disfranchisement of more whites than there were blacks enfranchised.

Smuts replied, "I sympathize profoundly with the native races whose land it was long before we came here. . . . And it ought to be the policy of all parties to take all wise and prudent measures for their civilization and improvement. But I don't believe in politics for them. . . .

"When I consider [their] political future, I must say that I look into shadows and darkness; and then I feel inclined to shift the intolerable burden of solving the sphinx problem to the ampler shoulders . . . of the future."

It has been argued that Smuts sowed the seeds of Apartheid at the peace settlement and during the years of his power that followed. He did not sow them:

Johannesburg's imposing Market Square in the 1890s, when Smuts entered politics, stands jammed with ox-wagons, a scene symbolizing the two worlds in which he had an equal part: on one side, the rugged Boer tradition of independent pastoralism; on the other, the outward-looking dynamism of the British prospectors, who turned Johannesburg into a gold-boom city.

that had been done decades before. He merely did nothing to uproot them.

Soon there was to occur across the Transvaal's colour line a confrontation which was to have consequences undreamt of at the time for South Africa, Britain, India – indeed, the world. Mohandas Gandhi had arrived in South Africa in the early 1890s to represent a Muslim firm in a civil action in Pretoria. He had had no thought of any destiny beyond earning a living for his family from the law he had learnt in London.

It was to be many years before his country called him Mahatma – "Great Soul." From the time he disembarked at Durban, he was treated as a "coolie" barrister, forced to travel third-class on trains even though he had a first-class ticket, exposed to all the discriminatory indignities that were standard treatment for Indians. There were by then about 100,000 of them in South Africa, chiefly in Natal. Some had been indentured labourers, and their contracts had expired; some had come as "free settlers."

At this time a bill was being pushed through the Natal legislature to disfranchise Indians on grounds of race. Hearing of this Gandhi, who was ready to sail for India, cancelled his booking to mount a petition of protest. Apart from visits home, he spent the next 20 years in South Africa; it was here that he formulated and developed the techniques of non-violent resistance that were eventually to take India out of Empire.

In 1907, he clashed with Smuts. Despite their superficial dissimilarities, the essential differences between East and West, Smuts and Gandhi had a great deal in common. Both respected British constitutionality and British compromise. And both in their wide vision of the future shared a basic integrity.

They groped towards each other through clouds of political cross-purpose, potential friends placed by circumstance on opposite sides of the battle-line. The issue was the "Black Act" – the Asiatic Law Amendment Act – which would close the Transvaal to new Indian immigrants and force the registration of those already there: all unregistered Indians would be deported.

Since imperial Britain was specifically obliged to protect Indian rights, Gandhi decided that his compatriots were legally entitled to resist the statute – but without carrying resistance into rebellion. What he proposed, instead, has come to be called "passive resistance." He himself objected to the phrase. The Indians were not passive, he said, and not weak, and the instrument of their resistance was the use of a kind of force, though non-violent. He later called the technique *satyagraha*, "the force born of truth and love." It meant the refusal to submit and the willingness to suffer the penalties for that refusal.

Fortunately for Gandhi, it was Smuts, the genius of conciliation, against whom he first used the policy. Later South Africans, less tender of conscience, less imbued with the honourable concept of not kicking a man when he is down, had a shorter, harsher way with passive resistance. As Gandhi and his *satyagrahis* trooped in and out of prison over the next few years, Smuts progressively eased the restrictions that bound them.

Gandhi's campaign reached its climax in 1912, when 50,000 Natal Indians took part in a massive *satyagraha* directed against a £3 poll tax and the non-recognition of Indian marriages. A protest from the Viceroy reinforced the pressure.

Smuts was by then the Grand Panjandrum of the Union of South Africa's first independent government under Botha; he was responsible for defence, finance, interior, mines, post and telegraphs – virtually everything, including policy. He appointed a commission of inquiry into Indian grievances, freed Gandhi, who had been in prison, and opened negotiations.

By 1914 the limited objectives of the *satyagraha* had been achieved. Gandhi saw that it could also be applied to the British in India, and the following year he returned there to put his ideas into effect.

It is a mark of the great spirit of both men that, throughout the bitter conflict, which lasted seven years, their mutual respect grew until it approached affection. While in prison, Gandhi made Smuts a pair of sandals which the latter treasured all his life.

Gandhi understood the framework within which Smuts had to operate. Smuts, on his side, appreciated the aspirations and arguments of a mind that was neither white-European-sophisticated nor white-South-African-simple. When Gandhi was assassinated in 1948, Smuts exclaimed, "A prince of men has passed away."

Throughout Smut's life his aspirations for his country were strengthened by his philosophy of "holism." And holism, in turn, strengthened South Africa. In two books he formalized the loose concept of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts and pointed out that nature tends to form wholes by ordering and organizing parts.

After the Peace of Vereeniging he and Louis Botha founded a political party in the Transvaal, Het Volk – The People – based on conciliation and unity. It was to operate on four levels: All Afrikaners – the *hensoppers*, or hands-uppers, who had been quick to surrender, and the *bitter-einders* – were to be reconciled. So were English and Afrikaans South Africans.

The four colonies – Natal, Transvaal, the Orange Free State and the Cape – were to be welded into an indissoluble union. And the resulting union was to be fitted into a liberalized Empire that would be more than the mere sum of its constituent colonies. Smuts had not yet fastened on the word "Commonwealth" in this connection; but he had used it previously to describe what he hoped South Africa would become.

Smuts and Botha worked together to make Het Volk a powerful instrument in the progress towards unification. The men complemented each other: the cosmopolitan philosopher and intellectual; and the blunt, poorly educated farmer, simple but noble, and persuasive in speech. It was Smuts who obtained from Campbell-Bannerman's Liberal regime responsible government for the Transvaal at the end of 1906; but it was Botha who became its first Prime Minister.

Looking back from the vantage point of the 1970s, it is hard to believe that there could have been hesitation or division over the idea of union. But at the time there were many problems. The four colonies differed drastically in their ethnic compositions, their economies and even in their climates and geography.

They ranged from the pastures of the High Veld to the exotic fruits of the low-lying subtropical coast. The Cape and Natal had ports: the Orange Free State

and the Transvaal were landlocked.

But the greatest disparities lay in their political outlooks. Many Afrikaners detested the "jingoes" – South Africans who were pro-British – and wanted no imperial ties whatsoever. General Christian De Wet, one of the bitterest of the *bittereinders*, later voiced their feelings: "I would rather live in a dunghill with my own people than in the palaces of the British Empire."

In Natal, the blacks could in theory vote, but the requirements were so stringent that almost none fulfilled them. In the Cape, they had a limited franchise. But in the Orange Free State and in the Transvaal the Boers forbade the natives' voting entirely, and dreaded the possibility that they might be enfranchised.

Transvaalers had long complained that their gold was being exploited for the benefit of the British. They deeply resented the mining magnates on the Witwatersrand, who were called "Randlords" in Britain. Overlooking the fact that the Randlords paid the bulk of their taxes in the Transvaal, Afrikaans patriots caricatured them as one single grasping plutocrat whom they dubbed "Hoggenheimer." A vicious cartoon showed Smuts being dangled as a puppet in Hoggenheimer's hands.

Despite the obstacles, however, union was inevitable. Confederation had already been discussed and found wanting. It was clear that what was needed was one single parliament, one single government. In 1907, Lord Selborne, Milner's successor, circulated the leaders of the four colonies to urge unification. During the following year delegates from all four met to hammer out a constitution.

One of the hardest nuts to crack was the selection of a capital. Conciliation won the day: there would be two capitals, Cape Town for the legislature and Pretoria for the executive; to please Bloemfontein, the judiciary would be established there.

Another problem was the official language. And here Smuts incurred the wrath of diehard Afrikaners. He could, said his critics, have become the patron of a movement then beginning to codify and formalize the Afrikaans language which had developed out of the dialect Dutch spoken in South Africa. He could have insisted upon it as one of the developing nation's legally approved tongues. Instead, he supported the use of High Dutch, side by side with English.

Botha and Smuts attended the Imperial Conference in London in 1907 and returned with calming news for the anti-British: the conference had decided that from now on all self-governing colonies were to become dominions. It was an important move towards full nationhood and a step towards Commonwealth.

The same year Botha and Smuts were accused of laying on "the loyalty butter too thick" when they convinced the Transvaal to present to King Edward VII the 3,106-carat Cullinan diamond. The largest chunk of it, the Star of Africa, now gleams in the Royal Sceptre; other "chips" are in the Imperial State Crown and in Queen Mary's Crown.

Smuts saw the gift as a symbol of Boer-British reconciliation, and in the debate preceding the decision he said: "I know it will be said again that this is another instance of 'slimness,' but . . . great things have been done for this country . . . to retrieve the irreparable wrongs of the past. His Majesty's government has given us millions to help us restore the damages of the war."

The Act of Union was approved by the British Parliament in 1909 and signed by the King on May 31, 1910, exactly eight years after the Treaty of Vereeniging. The vast territory was now to be ruled by its own legislature of 121 members, subject only to the Governor-General. The following year the new dominion held its first election. The ship of state was launched with Botha at the helm and Smuts beside him.

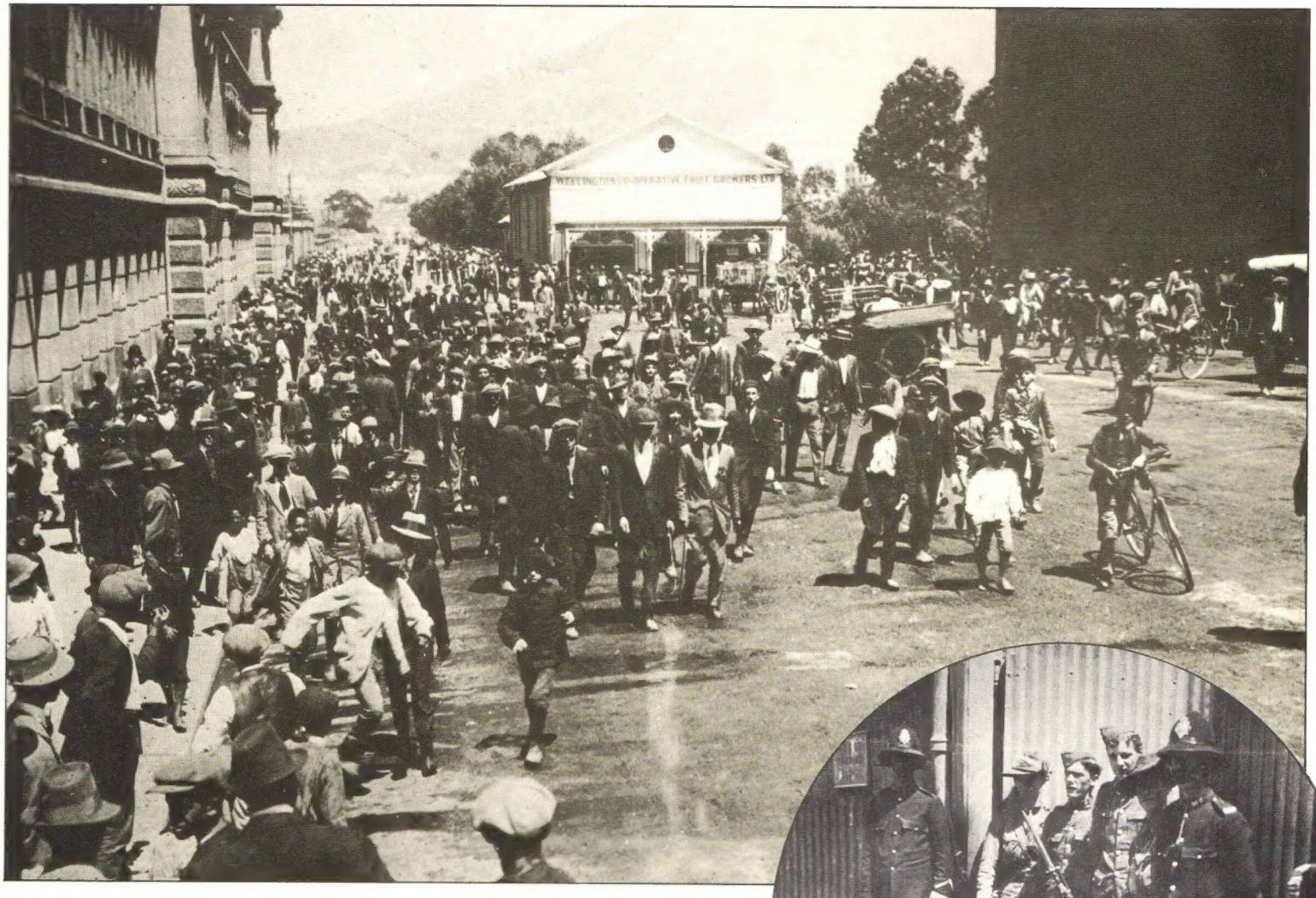
They hoped, of course, that union would bind up wounds. But within months, the fresh scars had re-opened. The *bittereinders* were still vigorous. Chief amongst them was General Barry Hertzog, soldier, lawyer and leader of the Orangia Unie, which with Het Volk and the Cape's South African party, dominated the new assembly. Hertzog saw Botha and Smuts as London's lap dogs, and despised the new Union government. But as a leading Boer separatist, he had an important following. So, for the sake of unity, Botha and Smuts set out to woo him, first with the offer of a judgeship, which he rejected, and then with the Ministry of Justice, which he accepted. But he served reluctantly and divisively, and when Botha formed his second government, Hertzog was not included.

Botha commented: "The true interests of South Africa are not, and need not be, in conflict with those of the Empire from which we derive our free Constitution." Hertzog's Orange Free State became the forcing-house of Afrikaner nationalism, and he himself the champion of the trinity of mystical entities which motivated it – the Afrikaans language, the Calvinist faith and the land. He wanted the two white races to function completely separately, each with its own educational system, speaking its own tongue, behaving according to its own conscience – a partnership between equals.

Before he left the cabinet he had declared "South Africa can no longer be ruled by non-Afrikaners, by people who do not have the right love for South Africa." He would have included anyone who put South Africa above all else. This attitude he gave free reign when in 1913–14 he moved uncompromisingly to crush industrial unrest, which he saw as a factional threat to South Africa's "wholeness." In 1913, the gold-miners struck. He hesitated to act until rioting broke out, and then suppressed it with too much violence. When trouble began again the following year, this time among coal-miners, he reacted almost too quickly: he instantly suppressed the strike with a show of force, and deported nine foreign-born strikers' leaders without trial, as "reds" preaching "revolutionary industrialism." White labour never forgave him.

The faction intent on *Afrika voor Afrikanders* also earned his enmity for taking too narrow a view. From Hertzog's agitation there emerged, in January, 1914, a new National party whose slogan was extremist: "The party is the nation and the nation is the party."

Historically, there could not have been a worse moment for the Union to be so riven. Within months the First World War erupted and South Africa was entangled from the start, both as part of the Empire and as a state sharing a common frontier with the German colony of South-West Africa. Was she to try for neutrality, support Britain or for



Strikers march through Cape Town (above) during South Africa's labour troubles early in 1914. Fomented by Marxists, strikes spread from the rail centres to white miners on the Rand, where violent rioting occurred. Smuts, then Minister of Interior, of Defence and of Mines, crushed it with troops. Soldiers (right) mounted guard on factories and Smuts deported nine of the leading militants without trial, evoking much criticism.

security's sake incline towards Germany?

Smuts was clear. He wrote in a private letter: "I love German thought and culture and hope it will yet do much for mankind. But a stern limit must be set to her political system which is a menace to the world even worse than Bonapartism."

As Defence Minister, it fell to him to widen the division into outright rupture. His government cabled Britain offering to use in South Africa, the defence force which Smuts had quickly and efficiently built, thus freeing British troops for operations elsewhere. The British accepted gratefully, and asked the Union to render a "great and urgent Imperial service" by capturing the ports and the powerful inland radio station of German South-West Africa.

Although Botha had envisaged a purely defensive role, he and Smuts acceded to this request – and brought a storm of protest down on their heads. Anti-British Afrikaners insisted that the statute which required the defence force to serve "anywhere in South Africa" meant only within the Union itself. Christiaan Beyers, an old comrade of Smuts's in the Boer War and commandant-general of the force, not only opposed the planned invasion, but urged on Smuts some dubious military appointments; one of his choices, Colonel Salomon Maritz, proved rabidly pro-German.

The most serious dissenter of all was General Jacobus de la Rey, a revered and aged Boer War hero. He was confused about the rights and wrongs of this vast international conflict, but convinced that while Britain's attention was elsewhere, he could lead his Afrikaners back into republican independence. Smuts and Botha reasoned, prayed, knelt and reasoned again with the old warrior; they only delayed the day of reckoning.

He was dangerous, not only because he could rally large numbers of intransigents and hotheads to his standard, but even more so because he believed that destiny had chosen him to cast out the imperial devils. This conviction rested on the vision of a famous prophet named van

Rensburg who had reputedly saved the day many times during the Boer War.

When the First World War began, the seer told de la Rey of a strange rag-bag of symbols: a grey bull trampling a red bull; the number 15 on a black cloud raining blood; the old man returning home bare-headed; a carriage filled with flowers. To de la Rey, this mumbo-jumbo forecast his leadership of a triumphant rebellion.

He convinced Beyers to join him in an officers' conspiracy. The other ring-leaders included Major Jan Kemp in the Transvaal, and Colonel Maritz on the South-West African border. Adhering to the prophecy, they chose September 15 as the night for the rising. That day Beyers resigned his commission, and he and de la Rey set out by car for Potchefstroom in the western Transvaal where they would raise the republican *Vierkleur* – the four-colour flag.

But fate intervened. On that very day hundreds of armed police and militia happened to be closing in on a band of notorious criminals. Beyers and de la Rey tried to drive through one of their roadblocks, thinking that it was a trap set for them. The police opened fire and one of the shots ricochetted off the road and struck de la Rey in the heart.

Van Rensburg's followers must have been awe-struck at the funeral: the old man, bare-headed on his bier; the carriage filled with flowers; the black car – the black cloud – stained with blood. And Smuts, they concluded, was the grey bull.

De la Rey's death stirred up wide unrest and wild accusations. Angry Afrikaners said that Smuts and Botha had deliberately murdered the old man. They reviled Smuts as a "sneaky reptile turncoat" and told him to "go and trek to England." Maritz crossed into German territory with his men, and turned over to the Germans as prisoners-of-war those who refused to fight their own people.

His supporters were later swept up in the Union attack on South-West Africa and he himself fled to Angola. Beyers, leading his traitorous troops in the Transvaal, was drowned trying to escape across the Vaal River from Union troops.

It was Botha who led the South-West African campaign in 1915, and he did so with drive and intense concentration. Although the terrain was difficult and the enemy's communications excellent, his troops, aided towards the end by a contingent under Smuts, trounced them in less than six months.

But his success did not result in the territory's incorporation, a disappointment to Afrikaners. Instead, at the Paris peace negotiations of 1919, it was merely mandated to the Union.

Smuts's own campaign which began in 1916 in German East Africa – now mainland Tanzania – did not end in such clear victory. He headed a mixed army, half-Boer, half-British, plus units of Indians, Rhodesians and Africans, against a first-class commander, General P. von Lettow Vorbeck.

Smuts could not bring the German to battle but kept him on the run until he lost even his nuisance value. The campaign was still unfinished in 1917 when Botha wired Smuts to give up the chase and, instead, to represent South Africa at the Imperial Conference in London to discuss the conduct of the war. There was a curious footnote to this chapter of imperial history: after the Second World War Smuts sought out the Lettow Vorbecks in Germany, found them destitute and helped them.

It was at the Imperial Conference, which included representatives not only of the dominions, but of India as well, that Smuts for the first time entered the circle of power at the heart of the Empire. He was welcomed into it like a saviour. The British establishment showered honours on him. He was lionized by industrialists, bishops, political hostesses, educators. King George V made him a Privy Councillor and a Companion of Honour.

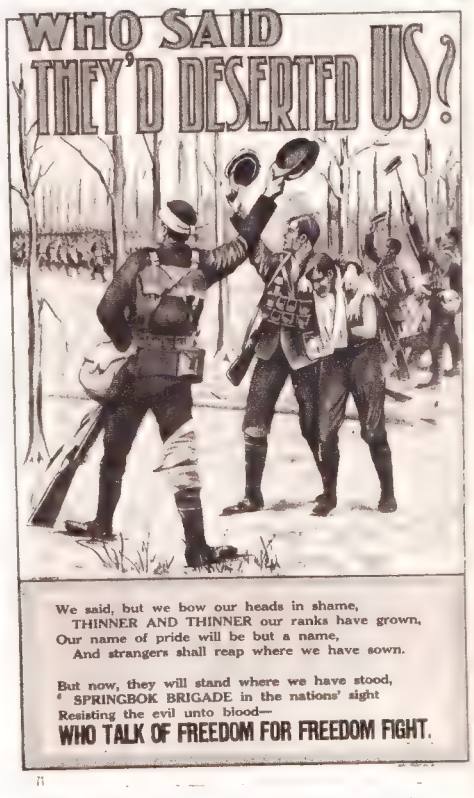
To understand the adulation it is necessary to appreciate the general gloom and war-weariness of Britain not long after the third Christmas of the conflict: the U-boat campaign was at its height; the Americans had not yet entered the war but the Russians were on their way out; and the grey shadows of Verdun and the Somme hung over the thousands of Englishmen as the Zeppelins, raining fire on moonlit nights, hung over London.

Smuts came as the embodiment of imperial vigour and energy. He was to justify this image and, as a result, he transformed imperial thinking.

Smuts did not quite trust Lloyd George and his new government, particularly since it contained an old adversary, Milner, who was wedded to the cause of Imperial Federation – the welding together of the colonies into a single superstate. Like the majority of the colonial premiers, Smuts wanted a system of independent nations. He now had the opportunity to initiate the transformation of the Empire into something altogether new, which would meet the aspirations of colonial nationalism while still maintaining imperial Britishness.

Aware that the Empire's future was too complex to be settled in wartime, yet too urgent to be left for later, Smuts solved the dilemma by drafting a resolution which the conference approved.

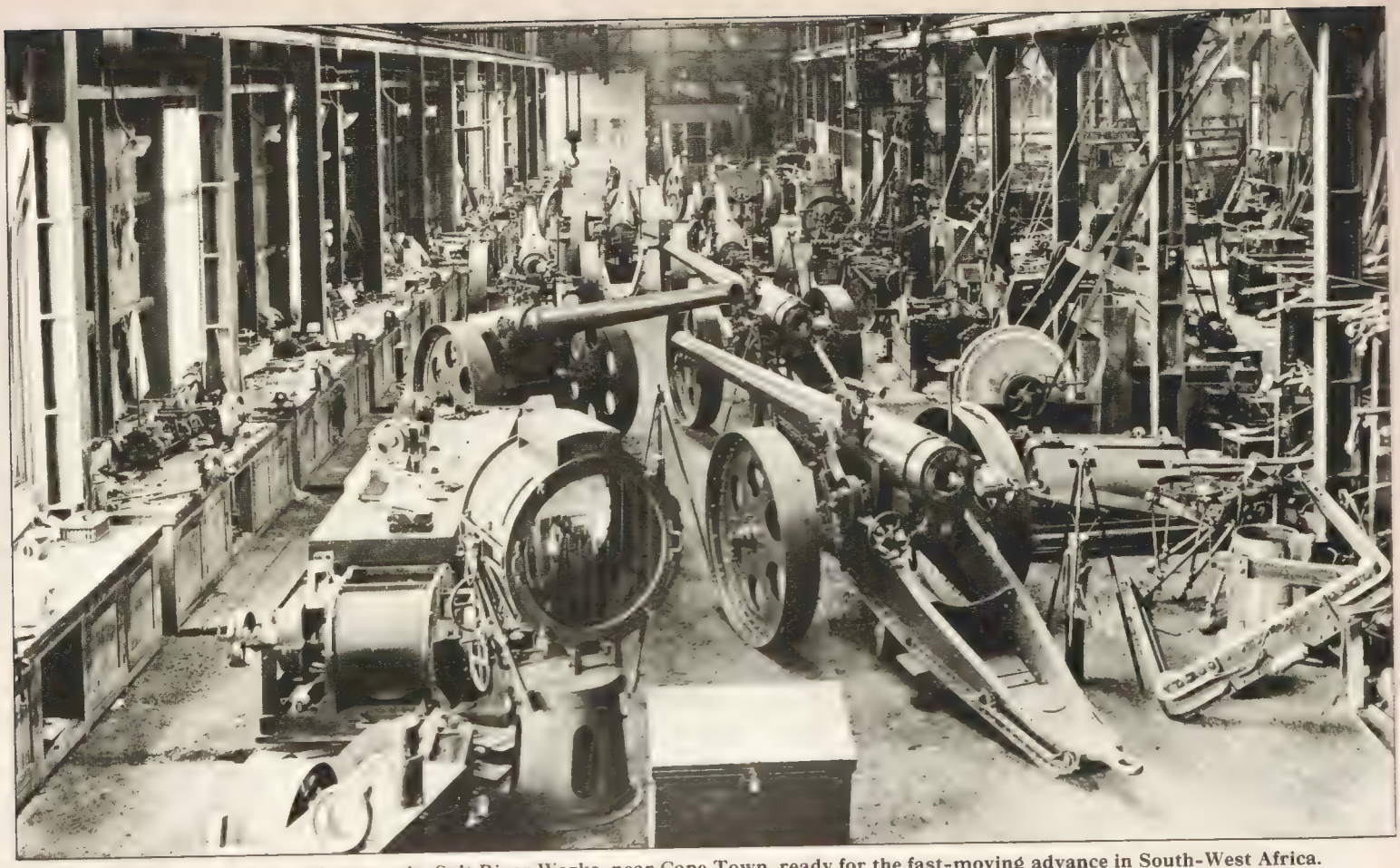
It amounted to a declaration of intent: Dominion autonomy must be preserved with "all existing powers of self-government and complete control of domestic affairs"; all must have a voice in matters of common interest. This, he said, must rule out any notions of a federation



A First World War poster, hinting at the Boers' initial reluctance to aid a former enemy, welcomes their belated support.

INTO THE AWFUL DESERT

At the outbreak of the First World War, Britain asked South Africa "as an urgent and imperial service" to attack German South-West Africa, for this adjacent territory dominated the Atlantic route round the Cape, on which the Allies must depend if cut off from Suez. When hostilities began, the Kaiser's troops seized the port of Walvis Bay, a British-held enclave. It was the Union's task – directed in part by Smuts – to retake this and to capture two German ports, Swakopmund and Lüderitz, as well as a powerful radio station in Windhoek, from which the enemy informed Berlin about British shipping. In January, 1915, Prime Minister Louis Botha invaded from the north via Walvis Bay (see map, left) while Smuts mounted a three-pronged sweep that included a westward trek over the arid Kalahari. Within six months, their combined forces had conquered what Smuts called "the awful desert of German South-West Africa."



Field guns are mounted on carriages at the Salt River Works, near Cape Town, ready for the fast-moving advance in South-West Africa.

General Louis Botha (second from right) and his staff officers study the grim terrain whose waterless wastes were to prove a far greater challenge than the German troops.

The Fortress Breached

Botha, who was overall commander of the South-West Africa campaign, saw the area as "a natural fortress on a huge scale." Its fertile central plateau, target of the attack, rose to 5,000 feet and was protected by formidable tracts of desert. The Germans, though fielding only 9,000 men against Botha's 43,000, had the advantage of mobility, moving men and supplies by an excellent rail system that ran down the tableland's centre and linked with the ports. It was, according to Smuts, "the principal implement of warfare used by the Germans."

The South Africans quickly captured Walvis Bay and Lüderitz, and the Germans evacuated Swakopmund. But as the enemy retreated, they tore up the rail-lines and poisoned the few desert wells with sheep-dip. Laboriously hauling supplies forward with mule-teams, Botha's men repaired the tracks and dug new water-holes. Then Botha badgered Smuts, who as Defence Minister was still in Pretoria, into rushing the rolling-stock, lorries and horses he needed "to give the enemy a good scare."

Finally, with his forces up to strength and expecting heavy fighting in the north, he summoned Smuts to divert the Germans in the south. Botha was confident now that the South Africans could strike towards each other along the central rail-line and win a quick victory.

Armoured-car crews take a rest. Their vehicles were like mobile ovens under the desert sun.

Smuts's eastern column pushes on across the

Clumsy well-borers like these had to be hauled by Union soldiers so that they could dig their own water-holes during the sweltering advance.

Kalahari desert through clouds of dust stirred up by the mules. Starting from Kimberley in Cape Province, it slogged for 500 scorching miles.

Motor dispatch riders were a vital link between Union commanders as their troops converged from distant parts of the vast territory.

General Botha's men, eager to use the enemy's own rail-lines against them, re-lay the metals and sleepers torn up by the retreating Germans.

Ambulances drawn by motor trolleys were used to pick up the wounded.

Portable X-ray units like this travelled with the South African forces.

Victory on the Plateau

Smuts had feared that the Union would lose many lives in South-West Africa. But the Germans proved surprisingly unwarlike. "Slim Jannie's" three columns met on schedule, surged northwards and, almost unopposed, reached the central rail-line in only three weeks. Then he returned to Pretoria to dispatch vital supplies by rail over the Orange River to Kimberley and from there westwards into South-West Africa.

By June 22, 1915, Botha felt certain that he could mop up the remaining resistance within a month. His cavalry easily destroyed the German opposition: once, as Botha's horsemen broke cover from the bush, the German commander cried, "This is not a war, it's a hippodrome!" Botha's estimate was out by only a few days: the enemy surrendered on July 9. The Germans tried at first to settle for a cease-fire, with each force holding the territory it then occupied, until a final disposition was made at the First World War's end.

But Botha, though he allowed the Germans to keep their arms and return to their farms, insisted that they acknowledge his victory, confirmed in 1919 when the League of Nations awarded the Union a mandate over the territory.

Supplies for Smuts's southern advance are ferried over the Orange River from Cape Province. They then had to be manhandled hundreds of miles across the burning desert.

A train laden with motor cars rumbles over the Orange River. Cars were more valuable than horses in a campaign that taxed physical endurance.

II. Years of Trial and Victory

Smuts did not envisage the Empire's destruction, rather its metamorphosis. Two months after the Imperial Conference, he expressed his ideas in an address to both Houses of Parliament: "The very expression 'Empire' is misleading, because it makes people think that we are one community. . . . But we are a system of nations. We are not a State, but . . . many States . . . under one flag . . . not a stationary but a dynamic and evolving system."

Now he put forward the name that he had long cherished, the British Commonwealth of Nations: "This does not stand for standardization or denationalization, but for the fuller, richer and more various life." The Commonwealth, "far greater than any Empire which has ever existed," would rest on three principles: loyalty to the Crown, a sharing of values and the exchange of ideas through conference.

This was Smuts at his most visionary – and his most practical. It was, perhaps, the high point of his life. From these beginnings came the Statute of Westminster which in 1931 formalized the existance of the Commonwealth.

When the Imperial Conference of 1917 broke up, Lloyd George asked Smuts to stay on. There was much to be done, and to the British Prime Minister it seemed that the South African was the man to do it. Smuts was offered, but declined, command of the forces in Palestine. He was offered, but declined, a safe seat in the House of Commons.

Undeterred, Lloyd George made him a member of the British War Cabinet. He was not a U.K. citizen. He had once fought against Britain. Never had a sovereign nation paid a greater compliment to a stranger within its gates.

The Prime Minister commissioned him to find a defence against the air raids on London and to explore the potential of the new art of aerial warfare. Within a fortnight Smuts and his committee had produced a blueprint for the reorganization of air defences and within another month a scheme for setting up a unified air force. Within eight months the Royal Air Force was operational. As Lloyd George wrote in his memoirs, if any man had a right to be called the father of the R.A.F., it was Smuts.

He seemed to be everywhere. He went to Palestine and provided Allenby with a brilliantly successful plan of action. He backed Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig – disastrously, as it turned out – in his Western Front offensive that led to the bloody tragedies of Passchendaele and Ypres. He won the hearts of hostile Welsh miners who threatened to strike by saying "I have heard that the Welsh are among the greatest singers in the world." The booing and whistling stopped. "I want you to sing me some of the songs of your people." They burst into *Land of My Fathers*, and "Slim Jannie" was home and dry.

Farsightedly, he propagandized for a limited victory as opposed to the complete defeat of the enemy. This, he devoutly believed, could be the only civilized starting-point for a lasting and just peace in Europe. Even more importantly, it could be the prelude to an effective League of Nations, which he already envisaged, (a dream he shared with President Woodrow Wilson).

He began the new year, 1918, with a prayer: "May the peace be not a German peace or an English peace, but God's peace enveloping all the warring nations with the arms of an Everlasting Mercy. To that sort of peace, I would contribute my last scrap of strength."

That year was a characteristically busy one. He first defused a potential Anglo-Irish explosion. The British wanted conscription extended to Ireland; the Irish were agitating for Home Rule. He advised the cabinet that it couldn't have one without the other. Since there could be no Home Rule for the present, conscription must be dropped. He then published his profoundly influential state paper *The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion*. This established the form, working methods and functions on which the Covenant of the League of Nations was to be based.

Following the German surrender in November, 1918, he resigned from the British War Cabinet to take on his next assignment, as a spokesman with Botha, for his own country at the Peace Conference in Versailles. The system of representation at the conference reflected the growing constitutional maturity of the Commonwealth, as its supporters already called it, even though Empire was still its official name. For the first time, the dominions were present in their own right at a major international gathering.

But if that was a triumph, the decisions taken at the conference dismayed both South African leaders. As men standing a little apart from European passions, and as men who understood from personal experience the value of magnanimity towards a defeated enemy, they shuddered at the harsh and humiliating peace imposed on Germany. They envisaged with dreadful clarity what the consequences would be. But nothing either man could plead in the name of sanity and humanity managed to stem the revanchist feelings that motivated the most powerful of the Allies.

Smuts hated the Treaty of Versailles as the Devil hates scripture. He called it "not a peace treaty but a war treaty," a "rotten thing," a "death sentence on Europe" and a "porcupine." He threatened never to sign it. But on June 28, 1919, together with all the other delegates, he did so. His only consolation lay in the fact that the Covenant of the League of Nations was incorporated within the Peace of Versailles.

He sailed from Britain for South Africa at the end of July, and learned almost as soon as he set foot on home soil how seriously his two and a half years in Europe had damaged political relations with his own people. For, within a month, Botha died, and his mantle fell upon Smuts. "Slim Jannie" was not only out of touch with events in the Union, but his achievements on the world stage had left the clear impression that he thought the problems of his own country trivial by comparison.

In the first general election he called, for March, 1920, he suffered a serious setback. His South African party came second by three seats to Hertzog's Nationalists, whose strength had consolidated while he was away. To remain Premier, he formed a coalition with the Unionist party; and some Afrikaners with long memories of Rhodes and Jameson, both of them anti-Boer and staunch Unionists, began to grumble.

After the election there were attempts to bring about a reunion between Hertzog's and Smuts's parties, but these foundered on the question of South Africa's position vis-à-vis the Empire. While Smuts had been working for

national development within the Commonwealth of Nations, Hertzog had been fanning the flames of secessionism, always a popular cause with those who believed themselves the victims of British greed.

Cynically, he had used one of Woodrow Wilson's tenets, that "small nations" had an absolute right to self-determination. Hertzog himself did not actually want South Africa to secede from the Empire; but he wanted to keep the options of constitutional development open; he wanted the *right* to secede to be precisely defined. For many of his followers, the matter was more straightforward: they wanted their republics back, and at once. This quarrel was to dominate South African politics for the next decade.

With his new political merger, Smuts called another election for early 1921, and won so handsomely – by 79 seats to the main opposition's 47 – that he felt safe in ignoring the clear signs of the Nationalists' growing hold on Afrikaners. Almost immediately, he was on his way back to Britain again, to take part in the Prime Ministers' conference that was to pave the way for an imperial constitutional conference the following year. He went armed with a memorandum that he hoped would provide the framework on which the conference could hand a definition of Commonwealth.

But he met unexpected opposition from senior British civil servants; and so effectively did the Australian Prime Minister, W. M. Hughes, repudiate any kind of "constitutional tinkering," that the planned constitutional conference was called off. Not that the ideas were forgotten: they very largely formed the Balfour Declaration of 1926, which stated that Great Britain and the dominions were autonomous communities, equal in status. (Ironically, the kudos was to fall to Hertzog, who was by then Prime Minister, and a member of the conference which hammered out the Declaration.)

Smuts might have written off his 1921 London visit as a frustrating waste, but he always had a lot of irons in the fire, and he once again seized upon one of the hottest: Anglo-Irish relations. Before leaving England in 1919, he had told the British that the Irish must be independent: it was the only solution for them, as it had been for South Africa. But in the meantime, things had grown worse, not better, with savage guerrilla fighting in Ireland between republicans and the forces of the crown.

Now Smuts lectured the King at Windsor, exhorted Lloyd George and cajoled Eamon De Valera and Michael Collins, the republican leaders. In an effort to divert both English and Irish from paths he was certain would lead to disaster, he enlarged to all of them on his own country's struggle for nationhood and independence.

Out of his good offices there came, after he had returned again to South Africa, the negotiations that led to the Irish Free State within a constitutional framework, as Smuts had suggested. (The text of the Anglo-Irish Treaty used the term "Commonwealth," its first use in a constitutional document.)

Smuts now had to grapple with violence in his own country and his administration of 1921–24 was marked by bloodshed. For this, he as Prime Minister must be held accountable, even though South Africa, with its racial and historical witches' cauldron of mutually antagonistic elements, was probably at this time virtually ungovernable.

The de la Rey Rebellion of 1914 could not have been dealt with except by force; and many have even said that too little was used. But Smuts understood the motives which animated men in that conflict, and must to some extent have sympathized with them. He showed no such understanding of men roused to armed defiance by motives unconnected with Boer independence.

It was just such a blind spot which gave him a bad name among white organized labour. This dated from the miners' strikes of 1913–14, shortly after Union, when he was Minister of Defence and of Justice.

Partly because of this rankling memory white workers were unwilling to listen to him in the strike that has come to be called the Rand Rebellion of 1922. The conflict became so ugly that the Prime Minister, in the end, had no choice but to deal with it by force. From the tragic welter there emerged an alliance of Afrikaner nationalists with supporters of the relatively small but vociferous Labour party which was to bring about Smuts's downfall only two years later.

The Rand trouble was rooted, as most South Afrikan troubles have been, in the attitude of whites to blacks. On the gold fields, few whites and many Africans were employed, individual whites earning, on average, 16 times as much as Africans: the wages bill for 21,000 whites was almost twice that for 180,000 blacks. The whites were jealous of the statutory and conventional colour-bars that preserved this prodigious differential.

But the palmy days just after the war, when gold sold at a huge premium, were finished. Gold had plummeted from 130 shillings per fine ounce to just under 78. A collapse of gold could spell utter disaster for South Africa. The Rand was the top contributor to the gross national product, and the mines also involved a host of other industries – railways, explosives, coal, iron and steel.

To slash overheads, the mine-owners' body, the Chamber of Mines, decided to cut down on their costly white workforce and to employ black men at black wages, in semi-skilled tasks which had traditionally been on the white side of the colour bar. The whites, mostly Afrikaners, agitated to save their jobs. Negotiations rapidly broke down and a strike was called. Control of the strikers fell first to an ad hoc body of relatively moderate officials, the Augmented Executive, who represented all the affected white unions.

But after some violent incidents, they began to waver, and control was seized by a group of Marxists, the Council of Action, who called on the workers of the world to unite for a white South Africa. In itself this would have been no serious danger to the government or to the country, for white labour was ill-organized away fron the Witwatersrand.

However, several connected features of the strike combined to make it very dangerous indeed.

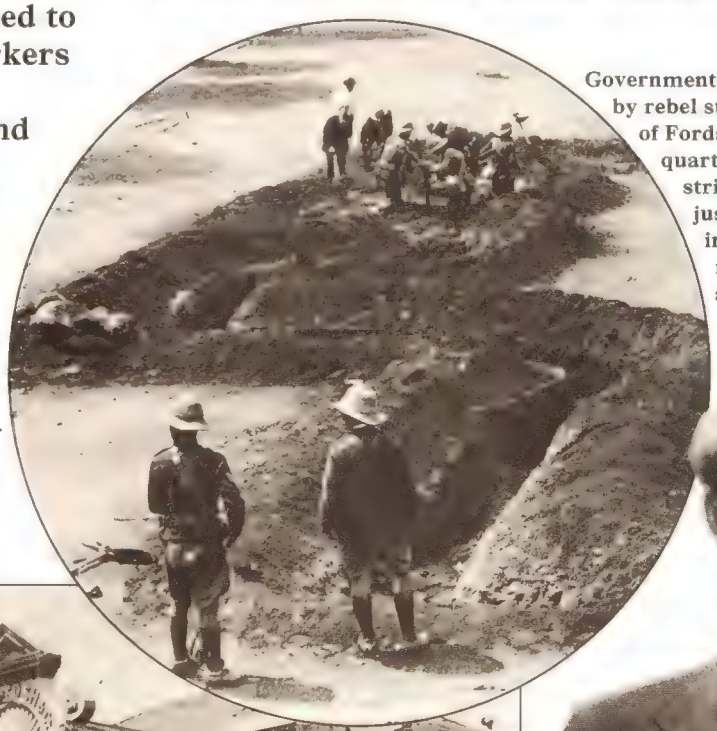
In the first place, the government appeared to be taking no action. And, although Smuts made some conciliatory speeches, he let drop such ill-considered comments as that the strike was a red conspiracy intended to turn South Africa into a Soviet state, and that *all* the leaders were Afrikaner Nationalists. Most were – but not all. He delayed taking any steps, in the hope that the strike

continued on p. 2064

REVOLT ON THE RAND

Smuts reaped the harshest criticism of his career in 1922, when unrest flared in the Witwatersrand gold fields. World gold prices had plummeted and the mine-owners, threatened with disaster, decided to replace semi-skilled white workers with cheap black labour. The whites went on strike, rioted and attacked native workers. When mediation failed, Smuts, who was now Prime Minister, declared martial law. In the battles that followed, 153 people were killed. Smuts's opponents accused him of resorting to *platskiet politiek* – the policy of shooting the opposition down.

Smuts (left) stands with the citizen force which helped to quell the rioters. A critic described him as a man whose footsteps "dripped with the blood of his own people."



Government forces inspect trenches dug by rebel strikers in the market square of Fordsburg, the insurgent headquarters near Johannesburg. The strikers' precautions were well justified by events: the insurrection developed into a minor war with sieges, shelling and air attacks.

A Fordsburg house stands shattered by an artillery shell, fired as government forces advanced in the face of persistent sniping.

Despite the intransigence of the militant strike leaders (right), resistance crumbled in three days. Four executions followed.

Mounted police ride at full tilt down a handsome Johannesburg thoroughfare to clear agitators and rioters on March 9. Martial law was proclaimed the next day.

MARTIAL LAW. KRYGSWET.

NOTICE. KENNISGEWING.

Women and children and persons well disposed towards the Government are advised to leave between 6 and 11 a.m. to-day that part of Fordsburg and vicinity where the authority of the Government is defied and military operations may take place. They will proceed to Show Ground with such blankets, food, and personal belongings as they can carry with them. They will take the following route:—Through Vrededorp Sub-way along Kaffir Street and 17th Street, then via Toll Street to the tram line, following tram line to main entrance of Show Ground. No immunity from arrest and punishment is guaranteed to any person coming out under this notice who has broken the law.

P. S. BEVES,
Brigadier-General,
Control Officer.

Johannesburg,
14th March, 1922.

Vroue en kinders en persone wat die Regering goed gesind is, word aangeraai om vandag tussen 6 en 11 uur v.m. die gedeelte van Fordsburg en omgewing te verlaat waar daar verset is teen die gesag van die Regering en waar krygsoperasies moontlik uitgevoer sal word. Hulle moet na die Tentoonstellingsterrein gaan en soveel komberse, kos en persoonlike goedere meeneem as hul kan dra. Hulle moet met die volgende pad gaan:—Deur Vrededorp Subweg langs Kafferstraat en 17de Straat; dan langs Tollstraat na die tremlyn en dan met die tremlyn tot by die hoofingang van die Tentoonstellingsterrein. Vrystelling van arres en straf word nie gewaarborg aan iemand wat die wet oortree het en onder hierdie kennisgewing uitkom.

P. S. BEVES,
Brig.-generaal,
Kontrole-offisier.

Johannesburg,
14 Maart 1922.

Isi Zulu ne Sesuto beka ko lunye ublangoti.
Se Zulu le Sesuto lebang ka hlakoring le leng.

1691—13/3/22—

Before the loyalist forces began their attack on Fordsburg on March 14, this notice went up, warning those not involved to evacuate likely danger zones.

might end peacefully of its own accord.

Nationalist politicians, seeing in this delay the chance to bring down the government, or at least to make capital out of its troubles, took action. A Transvaal Nationalist leader, Tielman Roos, went so far as to summon a "parliament" of Nationalist and Labour MPs, which formed a focus for the strike leaders' republican and Marxist aspirations. Roos also published a letter calling on the Active Citizen Force, the military reserve, to disobey any order to mobilize for the purpose of strike-breaking.

The strikers organized themselves into commandos on the Boer republican model. At first, these merely drilled and did a little innocuous policing; but eventually they beat up and even murdered white "scabs" and black labourers.

Thus, the government, reluctant to resort to martial law, was forced into a cruel choice: either to precipitate grave violence by using troops at once, or, as Smuts told the legislature, "to let the situation develop" so that the people could see "if there are revolutionary forces brewing in this country." He chose to wait, and acted only after the commando murders began.

It took three days to suppress the rebellion. The human cost was 153 soldiers, police, strikers, revolutionaries and innocent civilians killed, plus 534 injured. For Smuts it was a political disaster: he was reviled as a union-smasher, a butcher, a hangman and a man whose footsteps dripped with blood – enough to strip from South Africa's greatest international statesman his hard-won reputation as a champion of compromise and peace.

In two other incidents during this period, Smuts had already been labelled "ruthless." At Bulhoek, near Port Elizabeth, in 1920, members of a black separatist church, the Israelites, squatted on a piece of common land and refused to budge. An attempt to evict them was bungled, and they dug in and started to build houses. Smuts let a year pass without acting. Then 800 police, armed with machine-guns and rifles, confronted 500 Israelites armed with knobkerries, assegais and swords, and shot 163 of the Israelites dead when they charged.

In 1922, the Bondelzwaarts, an Afrikaans-speaking Christian tribe who had been driven from their homes by German settlers in South-West Africa before the First World War, also fell foul of the government. Ever since the Union had been given the mandate on the territory, they had dreamed of returning to their old homes and even of being permitted to set up an independent state there.

Again and again they had tried illegally to cross the border, leading their flocks and herds. At last, they broke into open rebellion. The action was put down with aerial bombing and artillery, and 115 Bondelzwaarts were killed.

As if all this were not enough, Smuts's administration was plagued with additional setbacks and misfortunes. It was, for instance powerless in the face of the post-war slump. Nor could he himself come to grips with the dilemma of how liberally to treat the Indians in South Africa: he was not repressive enough to suit his own countrymen, nor progressive enough for the rest of the Commonwealth. In 1923, Rhodesia rejected Smuts's confidently proffered invitation to join the Union. And he was dilatory about the race problem. All these factors contributed to the defeat of his party – and of him personally – by the Nationalist/Labour Pact under Hertzog in 1924.

He even lost his own seat. This led to the beginning of an ironic collaboration between the old antagonists. Hertzog, knowing that he would govern more effectively with a strongly led opposition, found Smuts a safe Parliamentary seat. So matters rested for nine years, made galling by the Pact's successes.

Some of their achievements were the direct result of a general improvement in the world economic situation and of natural phenomena like the breaking of a prolonged drought. Some, such as the Balfour Declaration which Hertzog brought back from London in 1926, should, in justice, have been marked to Smuts's credit. Some, such as Hertzog's substitution of Afrikaans for Dutch as an official language, and the bill introduced by Dr. Daniel F. Malan, the ardent nationalist, to provide South Africa with a flag to match its new autonomy, underlined opportunities Smuts had missed.

Increasingly, Smuts turned for comfort and the restoration of his spirit to the home, Doornkloof, near Pretoria, which he had created for his ever-growing family at the time of Union. He and Isie had nine children, three of whom died in infancy. Doornkloof, always loud with the noise of children and grandchildren,

During the Second World War Smuts (centre) and his family were all in the services.

cluttered with books, papers and friends who came and went casually, was a curious base for a great man – even one out of office. A wood and iron bungalow with a tin roof, it had been built as a recreation centre for English officers in the Boer War. "My tin palace," Smuts called it, and the place was comfortless to a degree. "Still a mess," commented one visitor.

But there was, wrote Smuts later, "no peace like the peace of Doornkloof." When he became Prime Minister again during the Second World War, he and Isie continued to live in the odd haven where they had spent nearly 40 years, and where simplicity was nurtured and deliberately preserved. He used the official residence only to receive state visitors. Doornkloof remained his refuge until the end of his life.

But there was no refuge from politics – or from defeat. He lost the next election in 1929, chiefly over the colour question. The Pact made political capital out of a speech in which he had dwelt on the dream of "a great African dominion." His opponents accused him of fostering a black "kaffir state" in which South Africa would be "but the white tip on the tail of a great black dog."

It was not at all what Smuts had in mind, but it was effective propaganda. The election was, in fact, won not by the Pact, but by the Nationalists, who were by now politically self-sufficient without the Labour party's eight seats. The Afrikaans working class had switched their allegiance to the Afrikaans Nationalist party because it had proved its ability to look after the workers, and the Pact began to totter.

At this juncture, outside forces took control of events. The global depression hit South Africa with disastrous effect: Britain decided to abandon the gold standard, producing a fearsome crisis that seemed to portend the collapse of the entire gold market. Hertzog stubbornly nailed his colours to the gold standard. As a result, while the rest of the world began slowly to climb out of the trough, South Africa remained economically prostrate at its bottom.

Support for Hertzog began to wane and by the time by-elections were held in 1932, his majority had been eaten away. Then Tielman Roos demanded a national government and denounced the gold

Dr. Daniel F. Malan, who was a long-standing political opponent of Smuts and formalized the policy of Apartheid, stands with his wife outside the Dutch Reform Church in Berkeley Square during a visit to London in 1953.

standard. This precipitated a terrified run on the banks against the South African pound. Hertzog had no choice: South Africa, the world's greatest producer of gold, abandoned gold-backed currency. Smuts approached Hertzog with a coalition in view. The two leaders met, argued, agreed and finally called a general election. Between them they won 135 of the 150 seats. Hertzog became Prime Minister, and Smuts his deputy and Minister of Justice.

Smuts profited little from the creation of what became the United Party. On the dominant problem of South African politics – the colour question – upon which his ideas were by now far more liberal than his new leader's, he had to give way. He acquiesced, for example, in the ending of the Cape native franchise in 1936, for which black Africans never forgave him. And in the long term – 13 years later – the man who inherited all the power was Daniel Malan, who soon broke with Hertzog to form his own "Purified" National Party.

A dour Calvinist teetotaller, a nationalist who was more narrowly nationalist than any man before him, Malan wanted to make the nation utterly Afrikaner. He pinned his faith in ultimate victory on the simple fact that demographic arithmetic proved that Afrikaners would eventually outnumber all other whites. All he had to do was to appeal to their historic struggles, their patriotism, and their ingrained feeling of superiority over both the British and the blacks.

While Hertzog and Smuts toiled to create true unity, Malan nurtured the separatism which he envisaged through organizations geared to Afrikaners' aspirations. The Broederbond – Band of Brothers – was a secret society which penetrated octopus-like into all of South African life. Its powerful offshoot, the F.A.K., was militantly dedicated to the predominance of Afrikaner culture and the Afrikaans language. And the Institute for Christian National Education, was sworn to root out heretical and foreign influences on Afrikaner children. Malan won converts every inch of the way.

Smuts, throughout his time as deputy to Hertzog, was deprived of the chance to act on the international stage, the natural arena for his genius. Hertzog kept foreign affairs entirely his own preserve, and with the exception of a single excursion to London for a world economic conference, Smuts stuck dutifully to his post as Minister of Justice. Dutifully but not, perhaps, fruitfully: the pace of colour-bar legislation did not slacken, and he was party to Acts of Parliament which accorded ill with his own more humane view of black aspirations.

Yet, confined within home bounds though he was, Smuts followed events in Europe closely and with growing apprehension. His beloved League of Nations began to crumble. The United States had never joined. Now Japan and Germany withdrew, and the League's policy of invoking sanctions against Italy over her attack on Ethiopia proved futile. At the same time, Hitler's increasing encroachments on his neighbours proceeded utterly unchecked.

Smuts saw the Nazis as far more "repulsive" than either the Fascists or the Soviets. Breasting strong tides of pro-German and of neutralist sentiments in South Africa, he warned again and again that war was inevitable. A victorious Hitler would mean an end to freedom not only in Europe; South Africa, with Germany on the march to regain her lost colonies, would not escape.

Hertzog, however, was determined that South Africa should remain neutral. After the Anglo-German accord reached at Munich in 1938, he persuaded his cabinet, including Smuts, into declaring that the nation would not fight unless her interests were directly threatened.

But in September, 1939, Smuts repudiated the decision; seven cabinet members voted with him, to Hertzog's six.

Hertzog requested a dissolution and an election. But the Governor-General, on the strength of Smuts's parliamentary victory, asked him to form a government. On a motion to the House next day, Smuts took South Africa into the war by a majority of 13. For the second time in less than 30 years of life, the Union was committed to fight against Germany, on the side of Britain.

Smuts, serving both as Prime Minister and as Minister of Defence, had to create an entire fighting force from a standing start. South Africa had entered the fray as a military pygmy, with no navy, only six modern aircraft (two bombers and four fighters) and fewer than 5,000 career officers and men. Once again, he displayed his dazzling talent for building armies and by mid-1940 South African troops were on the Abyssinian border.

But the main arena, at first, was South Africa itself: many nationalists, convinced that Germany would win overwhelmingly, adopted a quasi-Nazi stance, hoping thus to persuade the presumed victors to present them, when the hour came, with their cherished republic. This attitude was not confined to verbal battles in Parliament and press. In the cities there were violent encounters between troops and members of a secret army – the Ossewa Brandwag – Ox-Wagon Guard; and there were serious outbreaks of sabotage. The government clamped down and by 1943 nearly 600 people were interned (including the present Prime Minister, Mr. B. J. Vorster.)

However, despite Nationalist anti-war propaganda, the majority of white South Africans, and a substantial proportion of non-whites, responded with an ever-growing commitment to Smuts's exhortations for an unstinting war effort. The ranks of the Union Defence Force were filled increasingly by Afrikaners. Non-whites were not given the opportunity to fight, but many thousands were recruited for non-combatant roles.

After Tobruk, where the South Africans lost most of a division, they might even have been armed had not the whites viewed such a prospect with even greater horror than the prospect of defeat.

South Africa's main task was to keep the Cape sea route open, and in doing so she contributed substantially to Allied successes before the invasion of Italy. But Smuts himself had a wider function: commissioned a Field-Marshal in 1941, he was enormously busy and energetic – corresponding with Winston Churchill, reviewing troops in the Western desert and constantly in demand for consultation and advice. In the midst of all this, he found time for cultural interests: he arranged for the rescue from penurious exile in Lisbon of the Abbé Breuil – the world's greatest authority on Europe's cave paintings – and had him brought to South Africa so that he could study the country's palaeontological history.

The Coming of APARTHEID

In 1948, Smuts's career as a political leader ended. His paternalist view that whites and blacks, while remaining separate, must learn to "work together," proved too flabby for South Africa's staunchly white supremacist electorate. He was defeated by the Nationalist party of Dr. Daniel Malan, whose rigid Apartheid policies of racial segregation have held sway ever since. Attempts by black Africans, increasingly shunted into social and physical ghettos, to oppose his measures – whether by political action (as expressed by the poster, above) or demonstrations – were crushed, most dramatically and bloodily at Sharpeville in 1960. The following year, South Africa left the Commonwealth and retreated into isolation.

Plaster peels off the walls of Sophiatown houses that were built for 30,000 whites but became the ramshackle homes of 70,000 Africans.

Price of White Supremacy

Apartheid rests on the simple premise that the races should be segregated, with the white man in control. Outnumbered eight to one, whites barricaded themselves against the "black peril" by segregating blacks in "locations," forcing adults to carry passes and barring them from white areas except to work.

Most South African ghettos have been mass-produced for the purpose and share the same box-like dinginess and lack of facilities. One, Sophiatown, a suburb of Johannesburg, acquired special notoriety when its horrors were revealed by an Anglican clergyman, Father Trevor Huddleston, in 1956. Architecturally, it was less ugly than other "locations" for it was built to house whites and turned over to blacks after a new sewage plant drove the original residents away. A tall iron fence was erected around it to mark its changed role.

By the mid-1950s, it was two-thirds slum, with 70,000 people in an area designed for 30,000. Until it was razed in the early 1960s, Sophiatown's shacks, blisteringly hot under iron roofs, jammed what once were gardens, and entire families were packed in a single room.

The separation of the races on this footbridge – one staircase for whites, one for blacks – epitomizes the rigidly enforced segregation that became national policy in 1948.

African women cook and scrub in oil drums. Cramped living conditions forced the blacks to do many of their household chores out in the open.

These ghetto housewives have to turn their cluttered scrap of backyard into a temporary laundry room.

Bloodshed at Sharpeville

In 1960, African aspirations and the rigours of Apartheid clashed at Sharpeville, a "location" not far from Johannesburg. The mood of the blacks was tinder-dry, crackling over high rents, low wages and unemployment. The spark was provided by the hated pass laws which decree that any African caught without his identity card can be jailed for five weeks. On March 21, several thousand chose to confront the police without their passes and demand arrest. As they marched towards the local police station the chanting crowd swelled to almost 20,000.

Behind the station fence about 150 policemen clutched pistols, rifles and stens. Saracen armoured cars (left) stood by. Sabre jets dived low overhead. The blacks surged towards the fence. Several climbed over. A few threw stones. Without orders policemen opened fire. When the shooting stopped, 69 Africans lay dead and 180 injured.

2071

III. The Final Trek

In 1943 Smuts conducted a victorious election – the "Khaki" election – so-called because arrangements were made to register the votes of servicemen on active duty overseas.

It brought him to his last tenure of office, and, as the passing of wartime crisis eased the burden of responsibility from him, his health began to decline. Victories in North Africa and the Mediterranean made the guarding of the Cape sea route of secondary importance. This was, as he put it, "the pause that kills" after a man has been carried along by his own momentum for so long. Soon, he could no longer climb to the top of Table Mountain, as he had done all his life; now he could only stroll along the upper contour path. By the end of the war, at 75, he was very nearly spent.

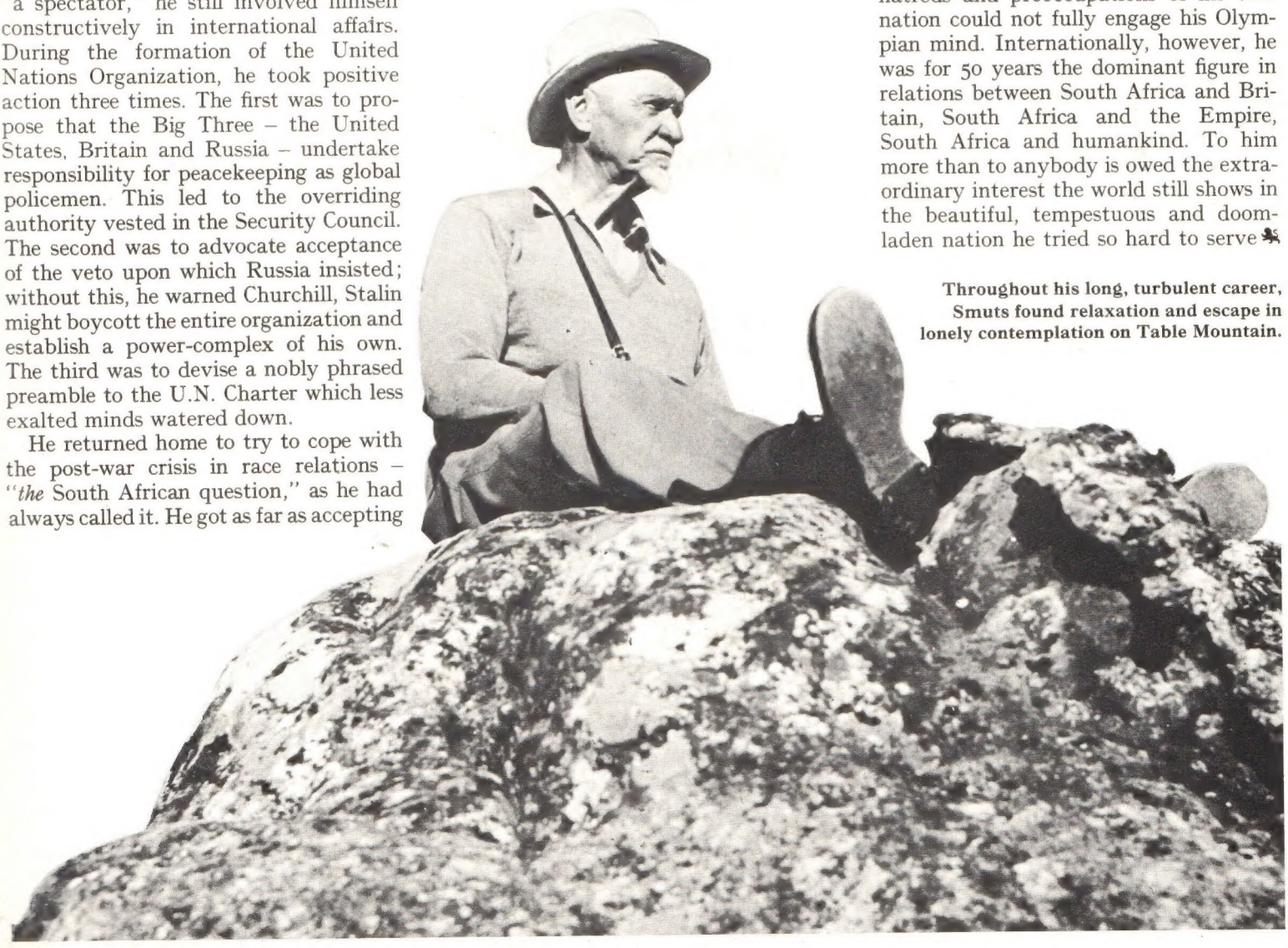
Yet, although he called himself merely "a spectator," he still involved himself constructively in international affairs. During the formation of the United Nations Organization, he took positive action three times. The first was to propose that the Big Three – the United States, Britain and Russia – undertake responsibility for peacekeeping as global policemen. This led to the overriding authority vested in the Security Council. The second was to advocate acceptance of the veto upon which Russia insisted; without this, he warned Churchill, Stalin might boycott the entire organization and establish a power-complex of his own. The third was to devise a nobly phrased preamble to the U.N. Charter which less exalted minds watered down.

He returned home to try to cope with the post-war crisis in race relations – "*the* South African question," as he had always called it. He got as far as accepting the findings of a commission, led by Justice Henry Allan Fagan, which recommended ways in which black and white could live together in harmony. This was at once countered by the Nationalists with the Saur Report, an expression of Malan's principle: that black and white South Africans could never live together in harmony and must, therefore, live apart.

The two reports symbolized the antithetical philosophies which confronted each other in the general election of 1948. In this poll Smuts again lost his own seat. His party led in the popular vote by almost 160,000, but that wasn't good enough. Thanks to the apportioning of the constituencies, Malan's Nationalists achieved a parliamentary majority of eight. So Smuts was out, and Apartheid, as the nation's official policy, was in. A few days later, one of his party colleagues politely vacated the safe seat he had just won so that "Slim Jannie" could sit in Parliament again.

Smuts's health by now was failing seriously; one of his sons, Japie, died suddenly; he could make no inroads into the Nationalist position, weak though it was after the election. Only the consolation of his wife and home remained to him. On September 11, 1950, Jan Christiaan Smuts died at Doornkloof.

In any company Jan Smuts must be considered to have been one of the truly great men of his century – a man of vision and clarity of perception, a man of large and varied learning and huge energy, a man of rare intellect and will. As an international statesman he had no equal in the Commonwealth and few in the world. At home his genius was blunted, no doubt because the petty hatreds and preoccupations of his own nation could not fully engage his Olympian mind. Internationally, however, he was for 50 years the dominant figure in relations between South Africa and Britain, South Africa and the Empire, South Africa and humankind. To him more than to anybody is owed the extraordinary interest the world still shows in the beautiful, tempestuous and doom-laden nation he tried so hard to serve.



Throughout his long, turbulent career, Smuts found relaxation and escape in lonely contemplation on Table Mountain.

Redingote or travelling dress, 1787

Bell